Part I

A new framework for equality

Chapter 2

Moral universalism

2.1 Introduction

In the introductory chapter, it was explained that the modern ideal of equality is traditionally associated with a set of background assumptions. One of these assumption is, as was explained, moral universalism. With moral universalism I referred to the idea that rules are necessary for moral judgements and are the basis for these judgements. These rules were supposed to be of the form:

Actions of kind α or distributions of kind $\vec{a}$ are μ.

Whenever one does α, or whenever there is a distribution $\vec{a}$ it is μ; μ is a moral qualification for example 'right' or 'should be chosen'.

The reason why a particular action is for example, right is that it can be subsumed under such a rule. In these rules the actions or distributions are described in non-moral terms in such a way that they can be recognised. In the previous chapter it was argued that moral universalism blocked a complete ordering that reflects how bad a distribution is regarding the ideal of equality. It blocked a complete ordering because of the influence of aspects of circumstances beyond those described by the distribution on the moral seriousness of inequality.[1]

Against the argument that moral universalism leads to an incomplete ordering it can be argued that instead of rules of the form

Actions of kind α or distributions of kind $\vec{a}$ are μ.

moral universalism refers to rules of the form:

[1] See chapter 1 p. 7.

> In circumstances of kind C actions of kind α or distributions of kind $\vec{a}$ are μ.

meaning that whenever there is a situation of kind C, an action of kind α or a distribution of kind $\vec{a}$ is μ. In such rules, the situation too is described in non-moral terms because they too should be accessible to observation. This could mean that moral universalism could be saved from the charge that it is responsible for an incomplete ordering, because the ordering is no longer on distributions simpliciter, but on distributions in circumstances of kind C. Consequently, moral universalism would be no longer inferior to moral particularism regarding the argument of incompleteness. The main issue in the discussion between moral universalists and moral particularists would become the question whether indeed all the relevant aspects can be specified by C.[2] The issue would be whether all our moral judgements about for example 'What to do?', can be represented by moral rules.

In this chapter, the introduction of moral particularism, the alternative to moral universalism, does not focus on the question whether all our moral judgements can be represented by moral rules. Apart from the arguments that our moral judgements can be represented by rules, one of which is spelled out in the appendix of this chapter, there is another issue in the discussion between moral particularism and moral universalism, which is more fundamental. It concerns the second part of the characterisation of moral universalism, the basis of moral judgements. Moral particularism or moral realism that is proposed in this chapter denies that moral rules are necessary in order to determine what is right or wrong. It holds that we judge that something is right or wrong because the world is as it is and not because our judgements can be derived from a set of rules we prefer or we decide to. We cannot point to rules as the basis of what is right or wrong.

This moral realistic alternative view means that the argument for an incomplete ordering regarding inequality is no longer valid, because by accepting particularism it is no longer a priori valid that if in a particular situation of a particular kind distribution of kind $\vec{a}$ is better than a distribution of kind $\vec{b}$ regarding inequality, it is also better in any other situation of that particular kind. This moral particularism also means that it is no longer expected that a political ideal of equality is based on the application of or deduction from a set of moral rules.

In the first part of this chapter, I discuss four ways of reasoning with moral universalism that claim to arrive at morally sound judgements and hold that moral judgements are not just expressions of taste or choice but are objectively sound. The four ways that are discussed are those proposed

[2] See also the discussion on separability, or independence of irrelevant alternatives, or the sure thing principle in [Broome, 1991, p. 94 ff.] [Hurley, 1989, p. 64 ff.].

by Hare, Singer, O'Neill and Gewirth; they capture the essentials of the main motive for adhering to moral universalism. Each of the four ways of reasoning provides an argument in favour of equality. It is shown that these four ways of reasoning with moral universalism do not satisfy the claim that it saves moral judgements from drowning in the sceptical morass. Hence, an important reason for moral universalism, namely that it leads to objective morally sound judgements, is undermined.

Subsequently two other reasons for accepting moral universalism are discussed. One is based on supervenience, the other on the concept of reason. Both reasons are dependent on the concept of similarity. Recognising this leads by following the ideas of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* to moral particularism.

In the second part of this chapter, moral realism is introduced. It is based on Davidson's radical interpretation view which can be seen as a further elaboration of Wittgenstein's ideas. After a short introduction of Davidson's radical interpretation view on language, moral realism is explicated by contrasting moral realism with moral universalism as it is elaborated by Hare, Singer, O'Neill and Gewirth. The contrast between moral universalism and moral realism is made clear by the issues of why people are moved by moral reasons, why they are moved by a particular moral reason rather than their own prudential reasons, and how the moral statements can be justified or how they can be known. These questions are commonly considered as serious problems for moral realism to deal with. In confronting moral realism with moral universalism on these questions, the answers of moral realism appear as superior to those of moral universalism.

In the third part, I turn to a provisional evaluation of what moral realism introduced in this chapter means for the development of an ideal of equality. Moral realism as a moral particularistic alternative to moral universalism opens up the possibility of a complete ordering because the argument for the incompleteness, as outlined in the former chapter, is undermined. In moral realism, separability being an element of moral universalism used in the argument, is clearly no longer a priori valid.

Another consequence of taking moral realism as a framework for the development of an ideal of equality is that in moral realism equality is based on a moral way of looking at others and ourselves. Seeing ourselves as one among others is not just a result of reasoning and calculation, it is a moral way of looking. Not seeing oneself as one among others is not a failure of reasoning, it is a morally defective way of looking at this world. Thus equality does regain its moral status. The invocation of a moral way of looking instead of reasoning is not a drawback, it is acknowledging that moral reasoning cannot do anything without taking a moral point of view. The moral point of view cannot be circumvented by reasoning.

Reasoning is not compulsive, and knockdown arguments are not available.[3] The moral way of looking at ourselves as one among others appears to be closely connected with the relation between first person statements like 'I like (believe) such and such' and third person statements like 'He likes (believes) such and such'.

In the next two chapters, moral realism is elaborated further by proposing realistic individualism and moral value pluralism as alternatives to volitional individualism and moral value monism respectively. After these elaborations it is possible to state and answer the criticisms on taking moral realism as a framework for the development of an ideal of equality, therefore that is postponed to chapter 5.

2.2 Why moral universalism?

2.2.1 The use of moral universalism

Moral universalism is supposed to be of help in providing a foundation for moral judgements. It is argued that teaching and learning morality is not possible without moral universalism [Frankena, 1973]. In learning morality one is learning principles which state what is right and what is wrong. In general, if one learns something one does not merely learn a particular instance of performing something, but one learns something which can be used again in the future. One learns to perform a certain kind of actions in certain kinds of situations [Hare, 1952, p. 60]. Similarly, if one learns morality one learns for instance, what kinds of actions are right and what kinds of actions are wrong. Learning morality means learning moral principles. These principles are the basis of moral judgements. They are of the form:

> In situations of kind C it is right to do actions of kind α.

Teaching, learning and even rationality itself assumes there to be something to be learned or to be rational. It concerns so-called principles of morality.

It will not be difficult to imagine that if there are several principles there will arise conflicts between them. For example the dilemma Jephta called down on himself (Judges, 11:30-40) is a situation showing the conflict between the principle of keeping one's promises and not ordering someone to be killed. Because of such moral conflicts it is argued that the principles of morality are merely rules of thumb which have a prima facie status such that we will act in most cases correctly if we follow them.

[3] See also the story of Achilles and the Tortoise cited in chapter 5 p. 159.

However, moral universalism does not merely mean that following moral rules will lead to making right judgements in general, it holds that it is one of the principal elements of morality itself. Moral universalism is not primarily important for so-called first aid in moral emergencies, in which, because we lack time and intelligence to discover all the subtle moral important aspects, we should rely on rough principles. It is held that moral universalism is important in arguing why those rough first aid rules should be kept at all. Its role concerns more than being rules of thumb.

Moral universalism expresses a view on morality in which it is assumed that there is something to learn that can be reasonably defended and argued for in an objective way. It tries to find criteria for what is right and what is wrong in order to escape moral scepticism. By this scepticism is meant that there is nothing special about moral judgements. They are seen as exclamations of preferences, which cannot be rationally argued for. Some believe that this has to be done and others believe that something else has to be done, that is the end of the discussion. There is no hope for agreement, there are no valid arguments. The only way of coming to an agreement that can be laid down in a contract is by bargaining, or using force. There is no sense in rational argument because there is no standard to which parties can turn for solving their disagreement. However, those subscribing to moral universalism take this subjectivism to be wrong and try to formulate a basic reason with the help of which the content of a rational agreement in a contract can be determined. Moral universalism is claimed to be of help in determining the content of such a rational agreement and in determining what kind of actions are right and what kind of actions are wrong.

There are several ways in which moral universalism is claimed to be of help. Four of them, namely those elaborated by Hare, Singer, O'Neill and Gewirth, are discussed. These four philosophers defend moral universalism as a central element in determining what is right and what is wrong and these authors represent the essentials of all other ways of using moral universalism. In the presentation, it is shown how equality is argued for within these elaborations of moral universalism. These arguments will be seen again in the development of an ideal of equality in this thesis.

'What if someone did it to you?'

One way of reasoning in which moral universalism has an important role in determining what to do, is by attending to the question: 'What if someone else did it to you?'. In other words, one is invited to look at another action of kind α that affects oneself instead of someone else. In his book *Freedom and reason* R.M. Hare illustrates this with an example borrowed from a parable that is described in Matthew 18:23 [Hare, 1960, p. 90]. Person i

owes money to person j and person j owes money to person k. Now suppose further that there is a legal system that makes it possible that someone can put someone else in prison to exact the debt owed to him. Suppose j is making up his mind. Can he maintain that he ought to imprison i? Universalism says he might, but in that case, he also has to allow that k puts him into prison.[4] Because he does not want this latter action to be performed, he should not imprison i. So in general, if someone is making up his mind whether some action of kind α that he is inclined to do ought to be performed, he should ask himself whether this inclination would remain if he were the one affected by an action of kind α. If it does not, he should not perform actions of kind α.

To be clear, the inclinations Hare points at are not just wants of a whimsical nature but concern also what are called by Hare ideals. For example an ideal in Hare could be that debtors should pay their debt or else be imprisoned, even if someone himself is a debtor. So, j having this ideal could admit that in wondering whether he ought to imprison i he has to be imprisoned by k too. His ideal is that debtors should pay whatever the consequences to himself. Ideals being pervasive can be so important that living without them could make life not worth living. That is one of the characteristics of central ideals, they can go against desires and direct inclinations for example, the reasoning of Sartre's Pierre in *Les jeux sont faits.* Pierre argued to Eve, if I did not help my comrades I would be worthless to you, you would live with a coward and our living together would be worthless. Although I put our life at risk, if I didn't I would not be the Pierre you love. Thus ideals can be pervasive and can go against what we want directly.

Although ideals that are pervasive are not necessarily irrational, they can be based on all reasons available, they are difficult to discuss. Disagreement on them cannot be settled easily and as Hare admits, sometimes they cannot be settled at all [Hare, 1960, p. 136]. Ideals are not essentially consensual, and disagreement can remain. This undermines the idea of avoiding the sceptical morass of subjectivism of moral judgements.

What would this reasoning with moral universalism mean for equality? Hare is explicit on this [Hare, 1960, p. 118]. Suppose three people have one bar of chocolate and they want to divide this bar. Suppose further there are no other characteristics such as sex, ownership etc. that are relevant. Then because of moral universalism and the absence of a difference that shows that one should get more than another, the bar should be divided in three equal parts. In situations of kind C one should do actions of kind

[4] The terms 'debt, pay, legal system, put in prison' are used here in a purely descriptive way without invoking any moral attitude to them. Within moral universalism this is held to be possible. Below it will appear that in moral realism this makes no sense.

α, where α is 'give a particular part of the chocolate' and the situations of the three persons are of the same kind C. Who is affected by α should not make a difference. If they received parts of different sizes, then the rule 'whenever situation of kind C one should do actions of kind α' would be violated. Hence, moral universalism would not be satisfied. So, moral universalism used in this way can justify equality. Without relevant differentiating reasons, all should receive the same.[5] We meet this reason for equality again but in a different way, not as an element of our reasoning towards moral judgements but as an element of our recognition that we are one person among other persons.[6]

Summarising, the way of using moral universalism in determining what is right and what is wrong, by directing one's attention to the question 'What if someone did it to you?', is dependent on inclinations, wants and ideals people have. A thorough disagreement on wants and ideals cannot be settled rationally. If one indeed thinks it is right to be punished with death by committing adultery, even if one committed it oneself (as the people in Thomas More's Utopia are suggested to hold), then according to Hare's view one cannot argue about this with someone who has other preferences and ideals. So, it does not solve moral problems as it promised to do. Let me turn to another way of reasoning using moral universalism that is less dependent on wants, desires and ideals of the actor.

'What if everybody did?'

Another way of using moral universalism is by attending to the question 'What if everybody did?'. It is elaborated by M.G. Singer in the following line of reasoning known as the generalisation argument. If some kind of action α is such that if it were performed by everybody it would have bad consequences, then not everybody should do that action of kind α. Because of universalism, if not everybody should perform an action of kind α, then no one should. If it were right that one or some did α, then it would be right for everybody to do α, because moral universalism holds that if something is right for one, it is right for all in similar circumstances. Whenever there is a situation of kind C it is right to do α, was the rule.

For example, if it would be disastrous if all robbed a bank, then no one should do. It can be the case that it would not do any harm if person i

[5] One can argue that in receiving parts of different size it is not clear at all that different moral judgements are posed on the three people, it could be the result of some procedure which is applied to all three alike. In this view however the equalisandum is not the bar but the application of a procedure. This problem concerning the proper equalisandum will be discussed in the next chapters.

[6] See chapter 6 p. 199

performed a particular action, for example took a flower from the park, or walked along some area in which rare birds were breeding, but it would still be wrong. Because if there is a reason for i to do the action there is similarly a reason for all others to do the same and that would lead to disastrous consequences. It even does not matter if it happened to be the case or if it could be argued that it is unlikely that others would perform it and that i is the only person who will perform the actions, it still would be a reason for all others and because if all performing this action leads to harmful consequences, it is wrong. If it is right for one to perform an action under a particular description, it is right for all. All could reason similarly. Disastrous consequences could still follow, according to Singer.

Of course a simple argument against this way of reasoning with moral universalism, discussed by Singer too, is that it is too coarse. One could argue that it is wrong to be a surgeon because if all were, the consequences would be disastrous. There would be no plumbers for clean water in the hospitals. There would even be no clean water outside the hospitals either. But also, it would be wrong not to be a surgeon. If nobody were it would be disastrous too, wouldn't it? So, the generalisation argument seems to lead to the conclusion that it would be wrong to be and wrong not to be a surgeon. The same goes for all professions and all important activities. Consequently, the generalisation argument seems to be worthless. However, these problems can be handled by admitting that indeed the argument is not applicable in cases in which the principle is invertible. If the generalisation principle is invertible the actions should be described in a more relevant way, for example: being a surgeon if one has the necessary capacities. It is not clear at all that if all who have this capacity become a surgeon would be disastrous.

There is another complication, namely if some action is described in an unnecessarily restricted way, for example dining at 6 p.m. at a particular restaurant. If everybody did, it would be disastrous. The problem here is that the action is described with irrelevant details such that they become iterative. In this case the argument cannot be used either. So, in the case that there are iterative predicates used and in the case that the argument is invertible the principle is not applicable. However, as shown by Singer, by adjusting the description properly it can be used.

Against the generalisation argument it is also argued that because moral universalism is trivial, its use cannot be but trivial too. For example, although it can be argued that if all robbed a bank, it would be disastrous and because of this it is right for no one to rob a bank, it can also be argued that it would not be disastrous if all called Lionel B. born 24-11-1964 robbed a bank. So it could be allowed for Lionel B. born 24-11-1964 to rob a bank. Because all actions can be described in universal terms with

only one person satisfying the description the principle would be useless. However, against this reasoning Singer replies that if being called Lionel B. born 24-11-1964 can be a proper relevant descriptive feature similarly we should admit that being Harold A. born 25-11-1964 to be a proper description. We would come to the idea that if names and dates of birth were relevant then again we arrive at disastrous consequences because all could claim to have a reason to rob a bank. Hence, we should not allow these arbitrary descriptions. The generalisation principle is not so easily dismissed as trivial.

Equality can be argued for by this generalisation argument. If it is right for one to receive a certain amount of some good, it is equally right for another. If not all can get the same amount then nobody should get it. Thus it can be seen that equality is a consequence of the generalisation argument. The idea of availability for all is met again in the ideal of equality proposed in this thesis. It holds that inequality is wrong because some are worse off than all could have been simultaneously. The reference situation with respect to which it is evaluated how worse the worse off are and how serious the inequality is, is determined by what is available for all.[7]

How should we evaluate this way of reasoning using moral universalism in determining what is right and what is wrong? It turned out that the answer to the question 'What if everybody did?' is dependent on consequences being disastrous. Without these judgements the argument is impotent. And about this, contrary to what Singer believes, there can be a permanent disagreement [Singer, 1971, p. 94]. Consequences seen as good by some are sometimes evaluated as disastrous by others. So, the whole argument for establishing a proper foundation for morality and a way of establishing what is right and what is wrong depends on this agreement. Although the generalisation argument seemed to be a way of determining the basis of morality, it failed because of its dependence on evaluating consequences and these are subject to very important moral disputes. Let me turn to another way of reasoning using moral universalism which does not depend on agreement on what counts as disastrous, but which uses inconsistency as an argument in showing that actions are wrong or are right.

'What if all others did it too?'

The third way of reasoning with moral universalism, which is not dependent on an external evaluation of consequences and which consequently does not suffer from the drawback of the previous ways of reasoning with moral universalism, is principally based on the idea of inconsistency and is borrowed

[7] See chapter 6 p. 198.

from Kant's categorical imperative. O. O'Neill explored it in her *Acting on principle.* Actions are best described by the maxim the agent holds in acting. Maxims are the most complete descriptions of what an agent is doing. In a maxim, the action is specified with the help of the intention and purpose of the action as it is seen by the agent himself. These descriptions have no moral content and are just descriptive; they receive their moral content by the following test. The test for determining the moral value of actions is whether it would be inconsistent to hold both:

1. I will α if C in order to P.

2. Everyone will α if C in order to P.

Actions of kind α under conditions of kind C with purposes of kind P are permitted if these two statements are not inconsistent. They should not be performed if they are inconsistent. Two kinds of contradictions should be distinguished: 'contradiction in conception' and 'contradiction in the will'.

An example of a contradiction in conception can be illustrated by the maxim becoming a slaveholder. The maxim on its own is not contradictory, but together with its universalised version it leads to a contradiction. If everybody becomes a slaveholder then everybody would have property rights and nobody would be a slave. Consequently, there could be no slaveholders, and therefore satisfaction of the universalised version is conceptually impossible. Hence, one should not become a slaveholder.

The other contradiction, contradiction in the will is more important. It arises if the maxim together with its universalised version cannot be maintained simultaneously; not because it is impossible to hold both, but because the universalistic part will lead to unfavourable conditions under which the success of the actions specified in the maxim becomes less likely. For example, it is consistent to hold that:

1. I neglect everything others need.

2. Everyone neglects everything others need.

Strictly spoken these are not inconsistent. But if I am a normal rational agent, I want also the necessary and sufficient means to success in order to reach some success of the action described by my maxim. So, if I am in need of help in order to succeed, then I also want help. But exactly this is denied by the universal counterpart; everyone neglects the needs of others. A similar argument should be given against governments who for example aim for a surplus in international trade. This is not universalisable, not only because it is impossible for all countries to have a trade surplus, but

because the universalised maxim will lead to conditions which make it less likely for the government to succeed.

With this way of reasoning with moral universalism equality is to be argued for in the following way. The maxim of acting for inequality leads to an inconsistency:

1. I will act in order to get more than everyone else does.

2. Everyone will act in order to get more than everyone else does.

First, it is impossible to have a situation in which everyone gets more than everyone else does. It is impossible and hence a contradiction in conception. But this contradiction could be circumvented by turning to competition and see the content of the maxim as trying to get more than others. Together with the universalised maxim there is now not a contradiction in conception. However, there still is a contradiction, a contradiction in the will. This contradiction in the will is the reason for condemning inequality.

The desire to become better off than the others, compete with others, should not be accepted rationally because the universal variant will lead to situations which precludes my becoming better off than others. Others will try to block my attempts to succeed. So, there is contradiction in the will. It is not said that competition is never permitted, it is, in restricted areas, in sports and games for example. Sports and games have as the ultimate goal not winning but playing itself. However, competition in the economic sense does not have this element of a game. It concerns everything. One central idea of games is that one can refuse to play a game, but one cannot reject economics or politics. One cannot see real life as just a game, because there is no other domain to retreat to as is possible with games. There is nothing beyond living, but there is something beyond sport and music competitions. So, it is not rational to want competition in which everybody strives to become better off than all others. It could be possible to defend competition to be rational as means of improving all, but it remains irrational to see it as the only means [O'Neill, 1985]. That is the reason why inequality should not be striven at.

This idea about equality, which is rather similar to the one connected with the generalisation argument above, is also met again in the idea of availability for all, which is a central element of equality as an ideal.

The reasoning with moral universalism in questioning 'What if everybody did it too?'and formulating the universalised maxim does not suffer from the drawback of the foregoing methods, in which the dependency on evaluating consequences undermined the use of universalism as a way of escaping the subjectivism and the relativism of morality. In the reasoning presented here such an evaluation of the consequences is considered as part

of the description of the actions by their maxims; the success of the actions is aimed at and is the ground for evaluating the consequences of the universalised maxim. It only uses inconsistency in conception or inconsistency in the will in determining whether something is right or wrong. The evaluation is internal to the test and not external as in those described in the former sections. This seems to be less arbitrary. However, its use in determining what should be done is highly dependent on the maxim of the agent performing the action. This dependency does make it less useful.

For instance, it can be argued that the act of refusing bribes should be condemned, because the universal variant would lead to the extinguishing of the practice of bribery and as a result refusing bribes would become impossible, hence an inconsistency in the will. Consequently, refusing bribes would not be permitted.[8]

This line of reasoning however could be rejected by holding that the maxim is not stated in a relevant way; it is not 'refusing bribes', but 'refusing bribes in order not to disturb a fair procedure'. The main element of the maxim is 'acting in such a way that fair procedures are not undermined', of which the universal variant is not impossible at all. But whatever the content of the maxim should be in this example, it shows the dependency of the precise content of the maxim. If refusing bribes is not seen in the light of the maxim of the agent furthering fair procedures, but the agent just refuses bribes because they are too risky to accept and nothing else, then refusing bribes would be not permitted. In other words, one should accept bribes.

Hence, an action can easily be argued as a permitted one by the test, just because it can be seen in the light of a particular maxim that will not lead to an inconsistency. The test seems to be more appropriate to judge reasons and persons than actions and situations. To be fair to O'Neill it has to be mentioned here that she emphasises that too. In this study, I am interested in evaluating actions and situations rather than reasons and persons. The aim of this thesis is the development of equality as a political ideal with respect to which distributions can be evaluated. As in the discussing whether something is right or wrong, the content of the subjective maxim under which the action is performed will be the most debated issue, which is not easily settled, the objectivity is likely to be threatened. So, let me turn to the next way of reasoning with moral universalism, which is not dependent on the precise content of subjective maxims or external evaluations.

[8] The example is due to Singer [Singer, 1971, p. 279].

'What is a right for you, is a right for another too.'

The previous uses of moral universalism did not show that moral universalism does overcome the threat of subjectivism. It was seen that moral judgements were dependent on ideals, evaluations of consequences as being disastrous, and subjective maxims. The fourth way of reasoning with moral universalism does not suffer from these drawbacks. It is a sort of transcendental argument. The line of argument is:

1. Agents perform actions.
2. Those actions have a purpose.
3. In acting agents want to control the process in reaching this purpose.
4. Consequently, as agents they see freedom as an important value for themselves
5. Furthermore, as agents they want to be capable of performing actions. Hence, they see well-being as an important condition.
6. Because they have a reason to claim a right to freedom and well-being and
7. because agents are similar as performers of actions one should judge rationally all other agents to have those claims too.
8. Consequently, all agents have a similar right to freedom and well-being.

The above reasoning exposed by A. Gewirth in *Reason and morality*, is not based on subjective wants of agents but on values that all agents as agents are bound to have. They have reasons for appreciating freedom and well-being for themselves. But because it is a reason for them it is a reason for others too (7). In this step moral universalism is recognised [Gewirth, 1978, p. 105]. So, if they are rational they see that other agents have those rights in a similar way. Thus equality as equality of freedom and well-being is a consequence of rationality. The idea 'what is a reason for you is a reason for another too' is met again in the ideal of equality proposed in this study, not in a chain of reasoning but as an element of what it is to recognise oneself as one person among other persons.[9]

In general, this reasoning seems undeniably valid, but what comes of it if it is used in particular circumstances? What is the sort of rationality

[9] See chapter 6 p. 199.

used and why is moral universalism used in this way? Let me turn to the question of how it can be of help in solving moral problems and how it gives an answer to the question 'What should I do?'

One of the problems seen in the application of the above stated ideas is of course when well-being and freedom conflict, or when the freedom of one person is in conflict with the freedom of another, or if the well-being of one person is incompatible with the well-being of another. In general, how does it help in solving these common moral problems?

It is argued by Gewirth that if there are moral conflicts, they can be solved by determining how important the freedom for one person qua being an agent is in comparison with the freedom of the affected other, or whether the well-being of one is more important for being an agent than the particular freedom. And of course similarly, the well-being of the one should be compared with the well-being of another in case there is a conflict. If the well-being of the first is less important than the well-being of the latter, the well-being of the latter should prevail.

As will be clear, the judgement on the importance for a particular freedom or well-being for being an agent is an evaluative matter on which all other judgements depend. So, the judgement itself is a moral statement about which there can be disagreement and many problems are of this nature. For instance, how much to spend on defence, or health care, or infrastructural improvements, which part of health care should be granted to all and which part can we accept as dependent on people's own choice? Whose well-being counts how much against whose freedom? It is not at all obvious that this fourth way of reasoning with moral universalism will be of help in solving moral problems in a way such that moral arguments get an objective status. Moral arguments remain dependent on evaluations, for example views about ideals, what is to count as more important, freedom or well-being; a dependency, which moral universalism wanted to circumvent.

Conclusion

Summarising, moral universalism was introduced as a way of lending more objectivity to moral judgements and as a help for arriving at moral solutions to moral problems. I discussed four ways of reasoning with moral universalism. I mentioned that each had its own view on equality, which we meet again as elements of the political ideal of equality proposed in this study. But the main issue here concerned the inadequacy of moral universalism to solve moral problems. Moral conflicts remain unsolved because people have different ideals, different ideas on what is disastrous, different descriptions and maxims of actions, and different judgements on the importance of actions with respect to freedom and well-being. So, in applying these

proposals it became clear that they do not satisfy the promise of moral universalism to pull morality out of the morass of subjectivity by invoking rationality. Moral problems are not solved at all by moral universalism. It has been shown that one reason for accepting moral universalism to be not quite adequate. There is no sense in accepting moral universalism if it is motivated by the idea that it saves moral judgements from scepticism. The main motive for adopting moral universalism is undermined. Nevertheless it is still possible that some other arguments show moral universalism to be unavoidable. Let me turn to these.

2.2.2 Arguments for moral universalism, and moral particularism

In the previous section, it was shown that in the end none of the four ways of reasoning with moral universalism could solve moral problems. One of the reasons for trying to establish and accepting moral universalism, is undermined. But it is not yet shown that it is false or unreasonable. Before I can conclude that it is false, I have to examine the arguments for moral universalism and show that they are not valid. To this task I will turn now. There can be discerned two sorts of arguments for moral universalism. One is based on so-called supervenience and is advanced by Hare and the other is based on the concept of reason and is proposed by Gewirth and Singer.

Supervenience

One reason for holding that moral universalism is true is because moral predicates are supervenient on non-moral predicates. This means that if two actions, persons, or situations are judged to be morally different then there has to be a non-moral difference between them, otherwise the use of the moral predicate is unintelligible. Moral predicates have a non-moral descriptive content in virtue of which actions, persons or situations receive their moral predicates. This view is argued for in the following way.

The word 'good' is learned as a word in situations of choice and is used for recommending an object or action. For instance, a good knife has some properties that makes it a good knife, it is sharp, easy to handle etc. So, because of some non-evaluative properties an object is evaluated as good. It would be unreasonable or even not understood, if two knives with similar properties were not both evaluated as either good or not good [Hare, 1952, p. 95]. Similarly, the moral use of the word 'good' has descriptive content. Because an action has particular properties it is good and is recommended. A similar action, i.e. an action with the same non-moral properties, should also be evaluated as good, otherwise the meaning of the

words 'good', 'right' etc. could not be learned properly and would not have any intelligible meaning at all. Moral universalism is a necessity for learning the meaning of moral predicates. It is derived from the necessity of supervenience of moral predicates on non-moral predicates. This supervenience has as a consequence that similar actions in similar situations, in which the similarity is stated in non-moral terms, should be evaluated equally. This view on moral language and moral universalism is advocated by Hare [Hare, 1952] [Hare, 1960].

If a certain non-moral description gives rise to a certain moral predicate, everything conforming to that non-moral description give rise to the same moral predicate. Similarity in non-moral predicates implies similarity of moral evaluation. The non-moral predicates are called standards of moral evaluations. This argument for moral universalism is dependent on the concept of similarity stated in non-moral terms. It is considered to be prior to similarity in moral evaluation. This view is questioned shortly, but first the argument for moral universalism based on reasons is presented, because as is shown both arguments can be criticised by one and the same argument.

The idea of reasons

The other argument for moral universalism is based on the concept of a reason. Moral universalists such as Singer and Gewirth hold that if something is Y because of predicates $P_1, P_2, \cdots P_n$ then it should be the case that always if something is $P_1, P_2, \cdots P_n$ it is also Y. When it is not, the predicates $P_1, P_2, \cdots P_n$ are not the reasons for Y, and there has to be some other predicate that is relevant for being Y. It is held that it is similar to the notion of cause. If something A is the cause of B then always: if A then also B; if A and not B, something different from A would be also part of the cause for B; thus the principal argument for moral universalism [Singer, 1971, p. 37][Gewirth, 1978, p. 105].

The above stated argument for moral universalism is dependent on a particular view on reasoning, namely as a sort of deduction in classical logic. But our reasoning is not covered properly by the system of classical logic. Some other possibilities are suggested as systems of reasoning, for example non-monotone systems as proposed by for instance, D. Lewis [Lewis, 1973] [Stalnaker, 1984]. These systems are called non-monotone because, in contrast to the classical systems, an increase in premises is not necessarily followed monotonically by an increase in conclusions. In this kind of logic, it can be the case that with premise P one can conclude Q but with P and some other premise P', one has to withdraw conclusion Q without holding that one cannot accept Q if P. So, P can be the reason for holding that Q, but not always, for instance, in the case that P' is also accepted. To follow

the favourite example of non-monotone reasoning: If Tweety is a bird then we can conclude it can fly. But if we learn that Tweety is a penguin we have to withdraw the conclusion that Tweety can fly. Adding the premise that Tweety is a penguin, leads to withdrawing a conclusion, namely that Tweety can fly. The set of conclusions does not follow monotonically the set of premises. Similarly, we can state that the reason for someone going to the island Schiermonnikoog is that he has his work over there. But he would not travel to Schiermonnikoog if one of his legs was fractured, or if he came to know the ferry was too dangerous. But that none of his legs is fractured, or that the boat is not too dangerous, is not a reason for his travelling to Schiermonnikoog. The reason is just doing his work over there and not the absence of all sorts of imaginary conditions which would preclude his going.

Non-monotone reasoning is more appropriate for modelling our reasoning than classical logic. By accepting non-monotone reasoning as more appropriate, the argument for universalism does not seem to hold any longer. It can be the case that doing his work on the island Schiermonnikoog is his reason for the journey, but not on all occasions he has that reason he will go. There can be defeaters.[10] Hence, the argument based on what reasons are, in favour of moral universalism, is not convincing.

Similarly, it can be held that making someone happy is a reason for an action that makes that person happy, until we learn it concerns killing foxes for pleasure or playing baseball by hitting simultaneously heads of cows. Being a lie is seen as a reason for not making the utterance, but in case you can save a life by lying it is different. In addition, borrowing a book is a reason for returning it to the one you borrowed it from, until you learned it was stolen by him. Something can be a reason without being a reason in other circumstances [Dancy, 1993, p. 79]. Reasons are not reasons on their own but only in combination with other premises, they are not separable. This phenomenon is accounted for in so-called non-monotone reasoning.[11]

Although moral universalism interpreted as separability of reasons is precluded by non-monotone reasoning, it is not denied that if because of $P_1, P_2, \cdots P_n$ something is Y, it would be Y in similar circumstances in which $P_1, P_2, \cdots P_n$ hold. In this interpretation one could argue moral universalism to be right. But now similarity turned out to be the main concept on which moral universalism is based just as it was in the argument based on supervenience. The two arguments have the dependency on similarity in common. Let me turn to this concept in order to determine whether the arguments for moral universalism are convincing.

[10] See also [Dancy, 1993, p. 24].

[11] A similar line of argument is found in [Brink, 1989, p. 160] in his exploration of so-called weak supervenience.

Similarity; Wittgenstein's view and particularism

In the previous paragraphs it became clear that the intelligibility of moral universalism depends on the concept of similarity. This concept appeared to be central in the argument of supervenience and the argument of what a reason is, but what does similarity mean? To what could we point in order to show similarity between actions, persons and situations? A first answer would be: a common characteristic. But what would that answer mean? Let me look at a simple case, similarity of length of persons. We can state that people are of an equal length if their length is equal, which means that as the result of performing a particular procedure, taking a measurement, the same number is given to persons of equal length. The procedure of taking a measurement could be described as the number of times a measuring rod can be put alongside a person in a lying position after that person slept well. But what should we say if one of the examiners broke off a little part of the measuring rod each time it was laid alongside the person and claimed to be measuring the length? To what could we point in order to show him he is wrong in his claim? If we said: 'Look here two people of equal height which are not of equal length according to your measurement.', he could answer: 'But those persons are not of equal length. They have, as I have just shown, a different length.' How could we convince him that he does not follow the prescribed procedure properly. Of course he does it in the wrong way, that is not the question, but how could we make him clear he is wrong. It is like the problem Wittgenstein posed in discussing what is it to follow a rule beyond the actions performed in following that rule [Wittgenstein, 1945, §185].

To what could we point if someone who claims to be 'adding 2 repetitively' goes on with 1000, 1004, 1008. How could we make clear that he is doing something else than 'adding 2 repetitively'? As was made clear by Wittgenstein, we could not point to some sort of programme because programmes can only be discovered by us in operation and how could we distinguish system failures from the programme? Wittgenstein's answer is clear, there is nothing to point to beyond the common practice of people, or the common form of life.

These practices are learned by us. One of the practices is learning language, also moral language. We learn to use the words 'good', 'right' and 'wrong'. We learn to apply these words to actions, persons and situations. From this it will be clear that the basic relevant similarities in actions and persons are their common moral evaluations and not their non-moral similarities. The predicates 'good', 'right' and 'wrong' are learned directly

in a common practice. In using moral language some common form of life and morality is assumed to exist. Morality is not intelligible beyond this common practice.

Consequently, it is by learning what persons are good, what actions are right and what actions are wrong, we learn moral predicates. We group them together under these moral descriptions of common evaluations. Afterwards we discover non-moral predicates that go along with them. But first moral evaluation, later the non-moral description. As McDowell argues, it is unlikely that we can group actions together in virtue of their non-moral predicates without already knowing what is good and right [McDowell, 1981] [McDowell, 1985]. Of course, we could learn this grouping together but not in a comprehensible way without already understanding the moral predicates 'good' and 'right'. For instance, in learning how to use the word rude, we can group together actions that can be seen as examples of rude actions and afterwards we discover the non-moral properties of these actions. These properties are not the basic grounds for describing the action as rude. The action can be described in that way because it is rude. To be clear, it is not denied that some moral evaluations can be learned by moral rules, but it is denied that they can be learned without having any idea of what good and right means. [12]

It is not denied that some reasons can be given why this particular action is rude by pointing to some features of the action. But the principal ground for calling this action rude is because it is rude, it is what rude means.

In short, the similarity which is relevant for moral predicates is dependent on the practice of moral evaluation, and not directly on the non-moral similarity. A supervenience relation happens to be true and is not a basic characteristic of moral terms. The non-moral terms are not the ground for applying a moral predicate. A moral predicate can be given because its application leads to a true judgement. The predicate 'right', or 'wrong', or 'rude' can be applied because an action is right, or wrong, or rude. To be

[12] Williams argues against this view that it is possible to use moral terms without accepting the moral judgement, namely in a quotational manner. For example, it is possible for someone to say: 'He said rightly that that action is rude.' without accepting the evaluative practice of using this term by himself [Williams, 1985, p. 143]. This can be accepted but it is an argument against the view that it is always impossible to use the non-evaluative counterpart of moral terms. But this is not held by the radical interpretation view (See next section). In this radical interpretation view it is just denied that all moral terms can be used in this way. It is denied that someone is a total amoralist and does not accept any morality at all, but a partial amoralist remains possible. The holistic nature of the radical interpretation view admits a partial amoralist. So, the internalism of radical interpretation is immune against the argument of Brink in [Brink, 1989, p. 45]. (See below)

clear, it is not denied that there are rules that represent our moral judgements or can even guide our judgements. But rules are no longer important in showing what should be done, or what is right in a particular situation. They are only derivatives of moral judgements. It can no longer be held that something is rude because it has such and such non-moral predicates. It is rude because that is what rude means. Those non-moral properties can be used as indications that some actions are likely to be rude but they are not the ground of the action being rude.

Moral universalism does not any longer service to indicate which actions are right. Rules can be rules of thumb, nothing more. The ground for evaluating some particular action as right, wrong or rude, is the rightness, the wrongness or the rudeness of that particular action and not some application of standards. Those standards are secondary. The particular judgements are conceptually prior and are embedded in a common form of life. Hence, moral particularism is more appropriate than moral universalism.

Summarising, in these sections it was shown that moral universalism did not solve moral conflicts. One of its reasons namely that it would remove moral conflicts and rescue morality from the morass of subjectivity, relativity and scepticism was undermined. Furthermore, it was shown that the reasons for moral universalism based on supervenience and what a reason is, were dependent on the concept of similarity. This concept was pivotal in the argument for moral particularism guided by Wittgenstein's view on rule following. The main discussion between moral universalism and moral particularism does not concern the question whether there can be rules such that by following them we will act morally right.[13] The crucial issue is the role of rules for moral judgements. In moral universalism rules are basic and in moral particularism the particular judgements embedded in a common form of life are fundamental. This is an aspect of moral realism that is discussed in the next part of this chapter.

2.3 Moral realism

2.3.1 Davidson's radical interpretation

After undermining the reason for moral universalism by showing that it did not solve moral problems, it was also shown that the arguments for moral unversalism were not convincing. The arguments based on supervenience and the concept of reason depended on the interpretation of similarity. It was shown that similarity in moral matters is determined by the moral

[13] See also the appendix of this chapter.

evaluation itself directly and not by the non-moral predicates as is held by moral universalism. It was argued that the foundation of a particular judgement is its truth. It is embedded in the common practice of moral evaluation. In order to understand each other we have to assume some statements to be true. We interpret with help of these the meaning of statements that people express. The common practice has to be assumed. The truth of some statements has to be assumed. Without this assumption, we cannot interpret what others mean when they use language. This is the central idea of Davidson's theory of radical interpretation [Davidson, 1984] [Davidson, 1986] [Davidson, 1990]. It is called radical because no expressions have a meaning on their own, all expressions have to be interpreted.

If we want to understand each other, we have to interpret each other. We meet each other and we try to determine what the other means, it is essentially radical interpretation. The content of beliefs and desires has to be interpreted. It was made clear by Davidson that we cannot understand what another means, believes, wants and does, separately. Beliefs, desires and actions are interrelated. We interpret another person by questioning him and by looking at what he is doing. We interpret actions and utterances. We do not ascribe first beliefs about the world to people apart from ascribing desires to them. It is done simultaneously and the ascriptions are interdependent.

Interpretation of what someone else means is only possible because we presuppose he has similar perceptions as we have, lives in the same world and is as rational as we are. The assumption that another is like us and lives in the same world as we do is called the principle of charity. If someone speaking an unfamiliar language sees a rabbit on the island Schiermonnikoog and utters: 'Look a deer' , our interpretation will not be 'Look a deer' (there are no deer on the island). We presuppose that he sees the same as we do, for example a rabbit. Our interpretation will be 'Look a rabbit', with 'deer ' he means a 'rabbit'. The same goes for reasons for actions. We have to assume a large part of similarity in what is valuable to us and what we care about, in order to understand what another is doing. If someone is walking to the baker, we do not interpret this as a way of getting parsley to the moon. In interpreting another we have to presuppose a broad agreement.

The agreement that is necessary for understanding, summarised in what is called the principle of charity, is not like an option for us. We cannot choose for it; it cannot be rejected. We just have to assume this principle in interpreting each other. We can of course argue about its content but the principle of charity itself remains transcendental to all understanding and deliberation. We have to assume a common world, without this assumption

we cannot interpret each other, and the content of beliefs, desires and the meaning and actions cannot be determined.

Utterances receive their meaning only by interpretation and this is only possible if general agreement is presupposed. This holds for utterances that refer to how the world is going, as well as for utterances that are evaluations of this going on. This radical interpretation is taken as the basis for moral realism that is referred to in this thesis. With moral realism I refer to the idea that moral judgements are taken to be true or not true independent of what we prefer or decide to be the case. In order to get this idea more clear I discuss it in contrast to moral universalism with respect to the issues of the explanation of the relation between moral beliefs and actions in general, why people are moved by particular moral reasons rather than prudential reasons and how moral statements can be justified or known? These are generally mentioned as serious problems for moral realism. I show that moral realism has plausible particularistic answers to these problems. It is the basis of the further elaborations in the next chapters, in which realistic individualism is introduced that can account for interpersonal comparisons, and in which moral value pluralism is introduced. But let me first turn to the questions:

1. What is the explanation of the relation between moral beliefs and actions in general?

2. Why are people moved by particular moral reasons rather than prudential reasons?

3. How can moral statements be justified or known?

in order to illuminate moral realism.

2.3.2 The relation between moral beliefs and actions.

In general, it is held that moral beliefs are linked up with actions and their motivation. Whether we read the work of Hare, Singer, O'Neill, or Gewirth, all are convinced that moral beliefs are inherently motivating and not because we want to, or we have a desire to be moral. The latter suggestion would lead immediately to the question 'Where does this desire come from?' What should the answer be: 'Evolution', or 'Implanted by our creator'? But can we accept these answers and still hold that it is our desire? They would be instincts rather than desires. We would not be moral because we want to, but because the way we developed in evolution, or because the way we were created. It would be external to us. But what else could we say? We like to be moral, just as we like ice cream? But do

we like to be moral? That is highly dubious. Invoking some desire to be moral will not be a satisfying answer to the question 'Why be moral?' An internal link is more likely.

An internal link of course has to be explained. Hare for example explains this link by his 'prescriptivism'. He holds that moral terms such as 'good' are learned in contexts of choice. One of the aspects of evaluating something as good is choosing it from alternatives that are less good. This choice is implied by the use of moral language. If one says that something is good but he does not act according to it, we doubt whether he really believes it is good. So, the question 'Why be moral?' is answered by Hare by his prescriptivism according to which moral terms go together with prescriptions.

Although it seems a plausible view, it is not a satisfactory answer, because it assumes that there is a strict separation between descriptive language and moral language. The former is used primarily as a way of picturing the world and the latter is primarily used as advice in situations of choice. Description is the primary use of the descriptive part of language and prescription is the primary use of moral language. But this separation is not convincing. We can use descriptions as prescriptions and the other way round. Shouting 'Fire' is describing and informing that there is some fire, but it is also some sort of advice, it can mean 'Call the fire brigade!'. Similarly, saying of Caesar that he was cruel, is giving a description. We cannot preclude that he became a ruler, we cannot influence his actions anymore. It is more like a description than a prescription. And why should we take the predicate cruel not to be primarily descriptive and 'Fire' primarily prescriptive? Why should we say that 'Fire' means in fact 'Call the fire brigade!', why not the other way round and say that the real meaning of 'Call the fire brigade!' is 'Fire' and the former expression is just a longer expression for the latter?[14] Although Hare's explanation for the internal link between moral language and action seems to be plausible, it runs into problems because of its separation between prescriptive and descriptive language. A disadvantage the radical interpretation theory of Davidson does not suffer from. But let me turn first to the answer of Gewirth and Singer.

The moral universalists Gewirth and Singer, answer the question about the relation between moral beliefs and actions by rationality. It is rational to follow moral beliefs. In denying moral claims to be relevant at all, one is irrational. But this answer triggers immediately the question: 'But why be rational?'. One answer would be that it is self-defeating to claim there are reasons for not being rational. In holding that irrationality can be argued for, one is bound to rationality. So, being rational cannot be denied

[14] See also [Wittgenstein, 1945, §19].

rationally. But it can be denied arationally. If someone is irrational and does not claim to have reasons for his irrationality we have someone who accepts arational irrationalism, which is held to be a consistent possibility. Hence, we have still to answer the question 'Why be rational?'. It is not answered by Gewirth and Singer.

In the radical interpretation view the question 'Why be rational?' is answered in a simple way. We are rational just because we are bound to assume we are. We cannot interpret each other as arational irrationals. The position of an arational irrationalist is a possible position, but cannot be lived up to in such a way that we should consider someone as being an arational irrationalist. In interpreting what others say, believe, want, and do, also the arational irrationalist, we have to suppose that people are rational like we are. Although it is a possible view, which is not inconsistent, it is not communicable. It is like the argument of Wittgenstein about solipsism, it is a consistent view but not communicable. The solipsist telling he is the only person in the world, is using the concept of external world in which he is the only object, which is not consistent, because the solipsist holds actually there is no external world, so he cannot express his belief properly [Wittgenstein, 1918, §5.62].

Before turning more extensively to the radical interpretation view on the relation between moral beliefs and actions, I have to mention the view of O'Neill. She would answer the question of how moral beliefs motivate for actions, that we could not live on our own. We are not autonomous separate persons who can do things on our own, we are social beings [O'Neill, 1985] [O'Neill, 1989]. But how this answer should be interpreted, is not yet clear to me. Sometimes it is stated as a prudential reason, but then what about those who in fact can do on their own. The prudential reason seems to be not satisfying because it would for example lead to the idea of caring only for the ones I may need and just forgetting all the others. It looks as if the original question is transformed into 'Why follow particular moral reasons instead of prudential reasons?' which is taken up in the next section.

In the radical interpretation theory of meaning, the link between moral beliefs and actions is explained as a general feature of language and not just of moral language as Hare did. As mentioned above, the meaning of utterances has to be interpreted. What somebody says, believes, wants, and does can only be interpreted. These elements are not interpreted separately. In interpreting what someone means, we listen and look at him, and we have to presuppose a common world we live in. If someone is behaving in a particular way, we will consider his behaviour as relevant information in determining the content of his beliefs. Actions and beliefs are not independent of each other. In the way beliefs in general are linked with

actions, moral beliefs are linked with actions as well. There is nothing special about moral terms linked with actions, contrary to what Hare assumed.

To be clear, it is not said that a particular belief leads necessarily to a certain particular action. This is not, contrary to what Brink holds, one of the elements of internalism [Brink, 1989, p. 45]. He argues against internalism, the view that moral beliefs and actions are linked conceptually, that it would consider an amoralist who can use our moral terms but is not motivated by them, or does not care about them, as an impossibility, while actually such an amoralist is possible. The possibility of such an amoralist is not denied in the radical interpretation view, if with an amoralist is meant a partial amoralist who does not share all of our moral convictions. Consequently, Brink would consider the radical interpretation a form of externalism because there is no link between particular beliefs and particular actions. But because a total amoralist with no morality at all, is incomprehensible in the radical interpretation view, the radical interpretation view is still to be considered as some sort of internalism.[15]

In the radical interpretation view it is stated that it is a conceptual necessity that language and action are knitted to each other. Linguistic utterances have no meaning without this link, they would even not be recognised as such. Beliefs, whether moral or non-moral, can be considered to cause actions because the content of the beliefs is determined by the interpretations of these actions. In explaining and understanding actions of others, there is no demand for a particular natural law connecting this kind of beliefs with that kind of actions; the intellectual discovery is the other way round. We act, we interpret these actions. We interpret these actions as caused by beliefs of which the content itself is an interpretation partly determined by these actions. The purpose is not finding laws between beliefs and actions and predict actions from beliefs. We are simply obliged to understand and interpret beliefs.

The general question 'Why be moral?' is answered in the radical interpretation view by the platitude that we simply are, it is a condition of interpreting each other. The link between moral beliefs and actions is just like the link between other beliefs and actions. Its nature is illuminated by radical interpretation simply as the relation between language, beliefs and actions. It makes no sense to consider moral beliefs apart from actions. The content of moral beliefs is determined by interpretation for which actions are essential sources of information. There is by necessity a conceptual link between morality and actions. In the radical interpretation view the question 'Why be moral?' is answered in a simple way.

[15] See the footnote on p. 35.

Summarising, the answer to the question about the explanation of the relation between moral beliefs and actions, is not properly answered by invoking a desire to be moral, because it is highly questionable whether we desire to be moral. The prescriptivism of Hare was neither a satisfying answer because it assumed a strict separation between descriptive and prescriptive language. Nor was the answer 'Because we are rational' on its own satisfactory. It had to be supplied by the radical interpretation view in which we see ourselves as rational. Being an arational irrationalist is not a recognisable option for us. The explanation of the relation between moral beliefs and actions is just simply that beliefs and also moral beliefs have to be interpreted and are conceptually linked with actions and wants.

2.3.3 Why follow particular moral reasons rather than prudential reasons?

The second question to be considered in order to illuminate moral realism does concern the motivation for following a particular moral reason rather than a prudential reason. It is closer to the common sense question than the former abstract question about following moral reasons without considering the alternative reasons. The alternatives lure people away from acting morally right, hence, the relevance of this more practical question.

In answering why following moral reasons rather than, let us say, prudential ones, we can expect answers like: 'Because it is rational.' This answer would be given by Singer and Gewirth. Or we could expect 'Because it is in everybody's interest.', or 'Because it is according to my ideals.', as would be said by Hare, or 'Because it is just right.', as would be claimed by following the ideas of Davidson. But are these answers satisfactory? The first would mean that not following moral reasons and acting according to a prudential reason would be irrational. But would we say this? If somebody acts on his prudential reasons and not on his moral reasons, is he just irrational? Is the liar who knows that he never will be discovered as a liar, and who gathers himself a great fortune by his lie, just irrational?[16] It is more proper to see such actions as immoral, and they may even be judged to be wicked. Such failing to act morally is not just like making a mistake in reasoning, it is immoral, wrong, and it can even be called sometimes wicked.

Acting in an immoral way is acting in a way that shows a failure to see the alternatives in a particular morally right way. It is not merely irrational.

[16] See also [Barry, 1989].

There are no compelling reasons to act in a morally proper way. We are not forced too, even not by reason. We should not look for a compelling reason for acting morally right, because there are no such reasons.[17]

In the answers given above to the question 'Why act morally right rather than prudent?', it is for example not settled who are the ones I have to concern about. It is not determined definitely by rationality who my neighbour is. Who or what belongs to the 'all' in the expression 'in the interest of all'? Who are to be seen as agents in the reasoning of Gewirth, who want to have control of their actions and are similar like me? What about stones, houses and animals? How to discern that they are not like me? What about people outside the circle of my family or village? What about the people beyond the group I need for my own purposes? In the view of O'Neill, presented in the previous section, the people beyond those I need might be excluded from moral concern. How should I look at them, just as if they are stones with which I cannot identify and which do not belong to the 'all' in 'the interest of all', and consequently do not belong to the ones who have a right to freedom and well-being?

Hare does not say who are the ones to identify with. He adds that identification with others is stimulated, extended and intensified by literature, novels, plays and poetry, but it is beyond rational control. In the end it depends on a particular way of seeing the world [Hare, 1960, p. 181].

In the radical interpretation view of Davidson the issue is not settled either, but it does not pretend to. In this view, it is made clear that all depends on a particular interpretation and seeing things or persons in a particular perspective. Morality is not just reasoning, it is perceiving the world in a particular way, in a moral way. Acting not in a morally sound way is not merely acting irrational, but it is showing some sort of moral blindness or moral insensibility. To act morally properly has its roots in seeing the world in a particular moral perspective [McDowell, 1981]. For example, accepting equality as an ideal can be apprehended as seeing the world in a particular moral way, namely seeing oneself as one among others. It is not based on a deduction like reasoning from abstract universal principles. Neglecting equality is not just a mistake in reasoning, but it shows lack of a particular moral way of perceiving. By acknowledging this moral perspective for equality, equality has regained its moral status and does not loose its rational basis. The same goes for many more ideals and moral judgements. A moral judgement cannot be forced upon oneself or upon another. One has to see or discern the point. One has to see what is worthwhile to care for and what not.

[17] See section 2.2.2 on similarity and also the story of Lewis Caroll of Achilles and the Tortoise in chapter 5 p.159.

Once the importance of a moral view is recognised, the next question is of course: 'How do we know which view or insight is better?' It is the question concerning the justification of particular moral views. It is an epistemological question. How do we arrive at moral knowledge? What is the role of perceiving the world in a particular moral perspective? How do we know that one view is more sound than another? Let me look at these questions.

2.3.4 Justification of moral beliefs

So far I discussed the issue of why we are moral, but I did not discuss the question: 'How we know a moral belief to be true?' This question has of course to be answered in line with ideas on how we arrive at knowledge in general; in other words with epistemology in general. Two issues dominate the epistemological discussion: the foundation of knowledge and the relation between our beliefs and the external world. A well-known view with respect to the former issue is foundationalism according to which we have some foundational beliefs from which others are inferred; without the former we would not have any knowledge at all. A common idea with respect to the latter issue, the relation between our beliefs and the external world, is that we arrive at knowledge because we are caused to. The world causes us to have particular beliefs. Let me examine these ideas more precisely in order to explain the possibility of moral knowledge.

Epistemology; a coherentist view

The foundationalist answer is inspired by the view that we have inferential and non-inferential knowledge. Knowledge that is justified is inferred, hence inferential knowledge. The possibility of true knowledge is dependent on the possibility of non-inferential knowledge which is basic [Dancy, 1985, p. 54]. Consequently, the basic knowledge has to be self-evident infallible knowledge. Sense data are suggested as this kind of knowledge. Although it seems attractive to see knowledge in this way, there are some serious problems with this view. Once sense data are postulated as basic knowledge, we have no escape from the inner world of the subject with sense data to the outside world. How do we know what we are experiencing, how can we use these sense data if these are just internal to us and only supposed to be transparent and clear to ourselves and not to someone else? How could the subject even be sure that he uses the sense data in a right way and that he gives the right names to the sense data if they are not comprehensible to others. To these questions Wittgenstein's private language argument is illuminating.

Suppose, there are mental phenomena that are principally inaccessible to others, as is assumed to hold for sense data; only first person judgements are possible. That person should be able to recognise the phenomenon. But there is only recognition if it is not the case that a subject thinking he recognises a phenomenon implies he recognises it. But how could he recognise the private phenomenon without it being true that thinking he recognises the phenomenon implies that he recognises the phenomenon? That is not possible, because he is the only one that can recognise the phenomenon. There is nothing beyond his experience of the phenomenon and nothing beyond his thinking he recognises the phenomenon. So, his thinking he recognises it, implies his recognition of the phenomenon.

> Let us imagine a table (something like a dictionary) that exists only in our imagination. A dictionary can be used to justify the translation of a word X by a word Y. But are we also to call it a justification if such a table is to be looked up only in the imagination? - 'Well, yes; then it is a subjective justification.' - But a justification consists in appealing to something independent. - 'But surely I can appeal from one memory to another. For example, I don't know if I have remembered the time of departure of a train right and to check it I call to mind how a page of the time-table looked. Isn't it the same here?' - No; for this process has got to produce a memory which is actually *correct*. If the mental image of the time-table could not itself be *tested* for correctness, how could it confirm the correctness of the first memory? (As if someone were to buy several copies of the morning paper to assure himself that what it said was true.)
>
> Looking up a table in the imagination is no more looking up a table than the image of the result of an imagined experiment is the result of an experiment. [Wittgenstein, 1945, §265](Translation G.E.M. Anscombe)

Hence, private experiences could not even be recognised by the person who has them. So, mental events which are inaccessible to others are even not accessible to the person himself, because he cannot recognise them [Wittgenstein, 1945, §244]. Consequently, the sense data have to be public accessible implying the possibility that someone is erring in experiencing. Sense data cannot provide the basis of infallible knowledge that was demanded. To be clear it is not denied that perceptions can contribute to knowledge but perceptions are not infallible. Wittgenstein's private language argument points to leaving foundationalism and accept the fallibility of perceptive knowledge. A view following this suggestion is coherentism.

In foundationalism there is a strict separation between basic beliefs and inferential beliefs. The latter are derived from the former. The former are supposed not to be altered, they are settled once and for all. Of course some new beliefs can be added and as a consequence the latter can be adapted but the former, the basic ones, do not change they only expand. By adding basic beliefs, the set of basic beliefs increases monotonically and none of them is retracted, but the set of inferential beliefs can alter and is not necessarily increasing monotonically. But is this a correct view? Why not accept that perceptual knowledge is not infallible, and accept that there are no basic beliefs that are infallible and accept an increasing coherence as a justification for a belief? Coherentism holds that a belief is justified if the set of beliefs is more coherent together with the belief than without it. If by accepting a belief, the beliefs in the set of beliefs mutually support each other better than without that belief, it is justified [Dancy, 1985, p. 111]. In a similar way, moral beliefs can be held to be justified if their acceptance in a set leads to a more coherent set. We could say that what is right is best fitting in our theory, i.e. it fits best in the set of moral and non-moral beliefs we have, a view which is explained and explored by Hurley [Hurley, 1989, p. 193].

But what of the relation of beliefs with the actual world? How to account for the correctness of the beliefs, how do we know it is not all a coherent illusion? The answer is simply: 'It cannot.'

Strictly spoken it is not impossible that we all believe a coherent illusion, but it is not comprehensible. Beliefs belong not to a transparent kind of objects installed in us, but we interpret beliefs. We interpret beliefs of others and also those of ourselves. As explained in the introduction of the radical interpretation view, in interpreting what others believe we have to assume that others see the same things as we do, aspire the same things as we do, live in the same world, etc. There have to be common truths also moral truths, without it, there could not be any interpretation. Because of this necessity it is conceptually impossible that we are all believing a common all pervasive illusion made up for example by some demon. Radical interpretation means that most people are mostly right, not because it is an optimistic point of view, but because otherwise we could not interpret each other and determine what others believed. We would be merely solipsists who did not even know what we believed for ourselves.[18]

In accepting a coherent view of justification of knowledge, moral knowledge becomes easily comprehensible. As Hurley states, we could hold that good is what is best according to the theory fitting best in our set of beliefs.

[18] As stated above solipsism is conceivable but not communicable [Wittgenstein, 1918, §5.62].

But what about moral perception as I proposed above, what about moral knowledge, do we perceive it directly as in so-called direct realism or via indirect perception and by inference as in so-called indirect realism? This latter seems to be the idea of Hare in his view on supervenience. His view can be explained by ascribing to him the idea that we perceive natural, non-moral qualities with our sense organs and infer from these with help of the standards we learned, or we constructed, moral qualities like rude, kind, good, right, evil, worthwhile etc., but we do not arrive at them directly.

So far, I did not discuss perceptions, although they seem to have a special role in the acquisition of knowledge. A common view on perceptions is that they are caused by the world. A causal theory of perception means that perceiving a cat is believing there is cat which is caused by the existence of that cat. The question is, do we perceive the cat directly or indirectly through a sort of sense datum or idea [Dancy, 1985, p. 143]. This latter is argued for by pointing to illusions and hallucinations. We can have an experience of perceiving a cat without there being a cat. Because we cannot discriminate between the two experiences, one caused by a cat and another not caused by a cat, there has to be some common representation, one caused by a cat and one caused by for example some demon who made up an illusive environment. McDowell rebuts this argument by holding that we have no reason to accept the existence of one and the same representation which can either be caused by a cat or a demon [McDowell, 1982]. He denies it is one experience and holds there to be two different experiences, one caused by a cat and another caused by a demon. The fact that they are not indistinguishable to us, does not imply they are similar representations, which would be a reason for holding that we perceive the world through these representations. So, indirect realism does not follow from the possibility of illusions or hallucinations. But even not noticed by Dancy, McDowell overlooked the main point of the argument.

If an experience is caused by something, let us say a cat on a mat, then because of the concept of causation it could be caused by something else. An event **e** can only be caused by an event **f** if **e** and **f** are different events. Event **e** is said to be different from **f** if **e** and **f** have different causes or different effects. This means that it is said to be caused by event **f** only if it is possible that it could be caused by something else than **f**. Otherwise, the events would not be considered as two different events.[19] We do not

[19] This is a consequence of for example Davidson's criterion for identity of events. Events are identical if they have the same causes and the same effects [Davidson, 1980, p. 179]. If **e** can only be caused by **f**, then it will have the same causes and effects as **f**. It could be objected that **f** could have different effects from those of **e**, namely in case there is no perception, but this objection is not valid, because we have already **e** i.e. a perception, which can only be caused by **f**, so it will not do to assume there is no **e**.

say that someone's sitting in his chair caused his sitting, or the event of perceiving the white cat on the mat caused the event of perceiving the cat. The events in a causal relation are separate and their relation might have been different. The effect might have been caused by some other event than the actual cause. The representation might be caused by something else than the actual cause, and as a consequence an indirect theory has to be accepted if a causal connection was the essential relation between the world and beliefs. But this indirect perception theory is not plausible, one form of it, namely the form in which the intermediate ideas are sense data, is already rejected. The other form runs also into problems as is seen next.

In the sense data view on knowledge it was held that the external world was inferred to and declared to be unobservable. It was shown to run into problems because of the assumed privacy of the experiences. There is however some other form which does not hold the external world to be unobservable, but which invokes the indirect intermediate representations as explanation of what it is to observe the world [Dancy, 1985, p. 166]. It is held that there is a sort of double awareness. One is aware of the world by virtue of the representations, similar to being aware of something via a mirror and not directly. There are some problems with this view because of the relation between the external objects and the representations.[20] What is their relation, is it one of similarity? But what is this similarity, is the representation of a triangular object itself triangular? It is difficult to affirm this. Turning to causation for help will not do either because the similarity will be lost, a cause is not similar to its effect.

There is another possibility along Wittgenstein's line of reasoning, which is however not explored by Dancy. The similarity is similarity in a common practice and learned in a way just as other practices are learned. But this answer shows that the intermediate representation in the observation is superfluous. Because now the intermediate representations are concluded to in the practice itself in a common world, they are interpreted as beliefs in Davidson's view. This common world and practice is a necessity for the interpretation of what others perceive and believe. The intermediate representations do not have a status apart from their relation to the common world learned in becoming acquainted with the practice of perceiving. Their special role in explaining errors is lost because errors can be explained without them. Errors are simply explained by the common practice of becoming acquainted with the world itself. This practice as a basis for knowledge implies also the possibility of error. That possibility is inherent to the concept of rule following in a common practice.

[20] In [McDowell, 1994] this is the main problem discussed. The solution McDowell proposes is similar to the one proposed below in the main text here. See also chapter 3 p. 103.

Because we can do without intermediate representations direct perception of the world is a more plausible view than indirect perception via sense data or ideas. This view called direct realism together with coherentism can account for perceptual errors, also moral illusions. There is no longer a necessity for basic infallible knowledge. Coherentism together with direct realism is a satisfactory position in epistemology that can account for knowledge and errors. The possibility of error is explained related to the common forms of life and the common knowledge, whether it concerns moral or non-moral knowledge. That some goods are valuable and consequently to be valuable to be distributed equally, can belong to such a corpus of knowledge. The coherence of the ideal of equality with our other moral and non-moral beliefs determines whether it is reasonable to accept this ideal or not.

Williams' argument against moral perception

In the previous paragraph, moral perception was argued to be possible just like other perceptions. But there is still a famous argument against moral perception to be considered. The argument is formulated by Williams [Williams, 1985, p. 145]. Williams argues against moral perception that there is no explanation for differences in perception resulting from differences of position. Such an explanation should make clear that different observators can have different perceptions of the same object. Such an explanation is lacking in moral matters but available for example in the case of seeing a broken stick while the stick is not broken at all but a part of it is under water, or seeing an ellipse while it is in fact a circle. It is agreed that one perceives an unbroken stick and a circle but that it looks like a broken stick and an ellipse. The images of the broken stick and the ellipse can be explained by the unbroken stick and some optics, by the circle and some optics, respectively. Because such phenomena are lacking in moral matters moral perception is not like visual perception.

Williams' argument would be refuted by an example in moral matters in which there is a difference between 'as it looks' and 'as it is'. Both, 'as it looks' and 'as it is', are necessary elements of perception. Peacock for example called them sensation and representation respectively [Peacock, 1983]. In order to arrive at such elements in moral matters we should find a case in which a moral judgement as it appears is caused and dependent on the way the moral judgement in fact should be. Then this appearance is tracking the true moral judgement and can be called an element of perception. Cases of indirect self-defeatingness as for example presented by Parfit seem to be proper candidates [Parfit, 1984, p. 5].

For example, suppose utilitarianism is the right moral theory then it could be possible to adhere to another theory, because adherence to the latter will lead to better actions evaluated by the utilitarian view itself. In this case a judgements based on this other theory is tracking the utilitarian theory which was supposed the right one. It looks to a person as if it is an action of certain kind but in fact, on the more fundamental level, it is an action furthering the greatest good of the greatest number.

Although it seems to be an example we are looking for, it is not. In the cases of visual perception, a person would not see a circle if he did not have the image of an ellipse and if one had not the sensation of a broken stick he would not have the awareness of the unbroken stick either. The perception of the object is due to this positional image. This relationship is lacking in the former example, in which utilitarianism called for another moral theory.

But what about the following story? Suppose, it is agreed that morality is learned in expanding circles, first in the family, then in the village and so on. Suppose it is by learning via these expanding moral environments that utilitarianism is learned to be the proper moral theory. Suppose further, that in order to act better in utilitarian terms, we should restrict ourselves to our nearby moral environment. Here we have a case in which the morality restricted to our own family, is based on the proper theory which is utilitarianism and this latter theory is the right one, arrived at via the restricted morality. Without the restricted theory we would not have learned that utilitarianism is the right theory. The restricted view is necessary for the utilitarian view and the latter is a ground for adhering to a restrictive one. Although this seems to be an example against Williams, it is not quite similar to the broken and the unbroken stick and the ellipse and the circle. In the latter, a person can hold simultaneously, even after explaining the distortion of his image by positional factors, that he nevertheless has the image of a broken stick. It still looks as if it is a broken stick, although actually he also knows and sees an unbroken stick. But in the moral case the person with the restrictive view cannot hold his view to be the right one if he accepts also the utilitarian view to be the right theory. Accepting one excludes the other. So, the moral case is not similar to those of visual perception.

Before proceeding, let me state what the relations are between the images of the object, A, and the object, B. We can state:

1. It looks A but it is B.

2. If it were not B, it would not look A; it looks A in virtue of being B.

3. If it did not look A, it would not be B; B is not recognised but due to A.

4. Even if it is recognised as B, it remains to be seen as A.

Fill in for A a broken stick and for B an unbroken one or for A an ellipse and for B a circle, then we have the cases of visual perception.

Consider now some agent-relative value, enjoying some friends or doing philosophy oneself.[21] Now there can be a situation in which enjoying my friends conflicts with others enjoying their friends, or my doing philosophy interferes with others doing philosophy. This could be a situation in which it seems that enjoying my friends and doing philosophy myself should be done, although in fact it should not, because the alternatives are more proper. The first condition, it looks A but it is B, is satisfied.

If enjoying friends or doing philosophy would not be valuable at all it would not be valuable for me either. This is the second condition, if it were not B then it would not look A.

In addition, if it were not valuable for me, it would not be valuable for others either. This interdependency is inherent in agent-relative values and their agent-neutral counterparts. It is to be seen as element of the principle of charity in the radical interpretation view of Davidson. This means that the third condition, if it did not look A it would not be B, is satisfied too.

The fourth condition, even if recognised as B it remains to be seen as A, is also satisfied. Even after recognising that others should not be hindered one could still hold at the same time that one should do philosophy oneself or enjoy one's friends. If it would be given up it could be given up also by all others; hence, it has to be simultaneously held that although it would be right to give up enjoying your friends and philosophy, it still looks different to you. We have a case which is similar to visual perception.

In the example the structure of positional objectivity is displayed.[22] It shows that Williams' claim that different positional views which can be explained in visual perception by optics, but different positional view cannot be explained in moral perception, is refuted. Although the explanation concerning moral perception is not necessarily physical in nature this does not affect the function of the example.[23]

[21] See for a discussion on agent-relative and agent-neutral values [Dancy, 1993].

[22] The term positional objectivity is borrowed from Sen in [Sen, 1993].

[23] It is argued by Putnam that the absolute view, which is assumed by Williams as the locus of explanation, was not intelligible at all [Putnam, 1992]. Putnam takes the following properties as characteristics of the absolute conception:

- It consists of primary qualities and it is physical in nature.
- It lacks value terms.
- There will be in the end convergence on it. (This is challenged on its turn by

The conflict and the relation between the first-person perspective and the third-person perspective in this example is mediated by a central element of the ideal of equality proposed in this thesis, namely the idea that what is valuable for me is valuable for another too. This means that the situation of being simultaneously equally as well off as possible with respect to some value, could be seen as the situation in which the conflict of perspectives is dealt with in a proper way. The ideal of equality mediates in the conflict of perspectives. One is not asked to forego what is valuable if one has less than what is available for all, but one can agree with being asked to forego what is valuable if one has more than what is available for all with respect to that value.[24] The relation between the first-person perspective and the third-person perspective is responsible for the conflict between the first-person view and third-person view, but it suggests also a way to handle it, namely by equality in which one can accept the first-person perspective and the third-person perspective together as in, it looks A but it is B.

By this example Williams' argument against moral perception is answered. Moral perception is a comprehensible possibility within coherentism and direct realism. Errors and their persistence can be accounted for. Perspectival elements of visual perception have their analogue in morality with for example agent-relative values and their agent-neutral counterparts. So, moral perception can be seen as a way of arriving at moral knowledge.

Summarising, the issue of moral knowledge is dealt with as knowledge in general. Knowledge can be accounted for by coherentism in which it is held that beliefs are justified if their acceptance lead to a more coherent set of beliefs, which is a set in which the beliefs support each other better, and direct realism holding that one perceives the world and the moral aspects directly. The foundationalist answer was rejected because it lead to an im-

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Rescher [Rescher, 1993]. A challenge not accepted of course by Putnam, it is one Putnam's characteristics of objectivity and truth)

- It contains explanations of locality, say positional objectivity.

The problems with this absolute view are according to Putnam:

- the relation between ordinary concepts and the absolute scientific view. Both use the same words but how should they be translated into each other? These translations are not determined (Quine). They will contain evaluations based on interests.
- the way this absolute world is pictured. If explanations are given in this absolute world, it will also contain counterfactuals, but these are exhibiting interests and contain evaluations, otherwise they could not be understand and the absolute world would not be plausible at all, it could certainly not give explanations.

[24] See chapter 6 p. 199.

plausible sense data theory which cannot account for an external world and was refuted by Wittgenstein's private language argument. Furthermore, it was argued that the causal theory of perception was implausible because it lead to an indirect perception theory of which it was shown that the intermediate representations were superfluous and did not have the role they were supposed to have. Coherentism does not suffer from these problems. Perceptive errors without intermediate representations can be explained. Coherentism explains how direct perception, and also moral perception is possible.

In moral realism as it is presented here, perceiving the world in a moral way was proposed as an answer to the question why people are moved by particular moral reasons rather than prudential reasons. Moral realism also explained the relation between moral beliefs and actions. Moral beliefs are interpreted beliefs, in which actions are considered to be important. There is a conceptual link between moral beliefs and actions. So, moral realism developed from the radical interpretation view of Davidson, in which moral particularism is included, can be considered to be a plausible alternative to moral universalism. After this brief introduction of moral realism as an alternative to moral universalism as background assumption for an ideal of equality, it is time to evaluate what it means for the development of the ideal of equality so far.

2.4 Moral realism, its particularism and equality

What is gained so far for the development of an ideal of equality by turning to moral realism as an alternative to moral universalism? First, the moral particularism of moral realism undermined the argument for an incomplete ordering regarding inequality. Although it might be possible for moral universalism to answer this argument in a formal way, moral particularism is a more radical answer.

Second, moral realism answers questions concerning the foundation of morality in a more appropriate way than moral universalism. Moral judgements and ideals, including an ideal of equality, are not to be expected to be derived from a set of moral principles. There is no set of compulsive principles and reasons for a moral ideal. As explained by the coherence theory of knowledge, moral beliefs should be related in a coherent way with our other moral and non-moral beliefs. Moral beliefs and ideals have their roots in a particular moral way of perceiving. The ideal of equality has its roots in a particular way of looking at others. In interpreting what is going

on in this world and what other people do, desire and believe, one has to assume that one lives in a common world with a lot of agreement on what is valuable. What is valuable for oneself has also assumed to be valuable for another in this one common world. In interpreting another one sees oneself as one among others. It is recognising that how well off another person is regarding a particular value matters as much as how well off oneself is. The first-person perspective and the third-person perspective are assumed to be dependent on each other. The ideal of equality proposed in this thesis is closely related to these ideas on a particular moral way of seeing others and seeing oneself as one among others. It holds that all should be equally as well off regarding a particular value as is possible for all. Moral realism is a promising background for the ideal of equality to receive its proper place.

But what about the argument against moral realism as a background for equality, because its moral particularism denies what equality affirms? In the introductory chapter it was mentioned that if equality has any meaning at all then it has at least to subscribe to 'like cases should be treated alike', which is subscribing to a rule.[25][26] This aspect of equality is said to be denied by moral particularism. So, how could moral particularism be a fundament of ethics in which equality has a role? Accepting equality and so accepting the principle 'treat like cases alike' is contrary to moral particularism. Moral particularism and equality cannot go together, thus the argument.

Although it seems to be a plausible argument it is not valid. Accepting equality is not accepting moral universalism and in moral particularism it is not denied that 'like cases should be treated alike'.

Moral particularism was introduced as the denial of moral universalism and moral universalism was the view that the reason for something being good or being right is to be found in rules. It would hold that one should accept 'like cases should be treated alike' because that is what rules mean. But this is not the essential meaning of equality. Just using rules and treating like cases alike is not acting on behalf of the principle of equality. Very often this has nothing to do with equality at all. For example, if a physician treats a patient suffering a trichophyte between his toes with a cream containing miconazol and he treats every patient suffering the same disease with the same cream, he does not treat them alike because of the ideal of equality. He treats them alike because they suffer the same pathology, a trichophyte, for which the same treatment is effective. It would be different if there was scarcity of antimycotic therapeutics, but this scarcity does not play a significant role in decisions on therapies for

[25] See chapter 1 p. 6.

[26] See also de Beus in [De Beus, 1993] who develops an ideal of equality from procedural equality with the help of humanism.

rather simple diseases like a trichophyte. So, treating like cases alike is not the same as acting on behalf of the ideal of equality.

The foregoing example does not show that equality does not imply moral universalism, it is merely argued that they are not the same. But the example suggests what the crucial difference is between them. Moral universalism was a basis for moral judgements, not a moral one, but a rational one. In moral universalism it is impossible to deny the principle 'treat like cases alike', it is even seen as the basis of all judgements. But if the ideal of equality is interpreted as moral universalism it has been stripped from its moral aspect. Something would not be any longer judged according to the moral principle of equality, but just because of what making a judgement means. So, equality interpreted as moral universalism does lack an essential aspect, namely the moral aspect. This moral aspect is given back to the ideal of equality by moral realism by pointing to the moral way of looking at oneself as one among others as the basis for the ideal of equality.

But what about the idea that equality implies moral universalism, is this a correct idea? No, because accepting equality is not holding that something is good because of such and such a rule, as is claimed in moral universalism. It will mean that something is right or wrong for example because it exhibits equality or inequality. This is how moral ideals are used, or how they are expressed. Equality does not imply moral universalism.

The idea that equality implies moral universalism is likely based on the belief that if a situation is in accord with the principle of equality then it is also in accord with moral universalism, as in every model satisfying equality is also satisfying moral universalism means equality implies moral universalism. But this reasoning missed the essence of moral universalism and the essence of the principle of equality. Satisfying rules is not the same as being good because of those rules. The idea of 'because of' is not captured by the idea of a model satisfying some theory.[27] Following equality is merely apparently like accepting moral universalism. The reasons for judgements are different. In judging something to be good with respect to equality, one is judging the equality exhibited to be good because it is good. In moral universalism something is judged to be good on behalf of a rule.

The argument that equality is inconsistent with moral particularism is presumably based on the wrong assumption that within moral particularism no moral rules can be accepted. If that was a proper assumption, equality indeed would be inconsistent with moral particularism. But rules can be accepted within moral particularism, but they are not to be considered as

[27] This is illustrate also by the awkward dictator in Arrow's theorem, who can lack any influence on the social decision function, but who just happens to be in accord with it. See chapter 3 p. 66.

the foundation of moral judgements. The fundament of something being right or wrong is just its being right or wrong. That something is wrong because it is not according the ideal of equality does not mean it is wrong because the rule 'treat similar cases similarly' is violated, but because it is violated in a particular way, in an inegalitarian way, namely that some are worse off than all could have been simultaneously. The crucial difference between moral universalism and moral particularism is not whether or not there are some rules that could be followed in order to be sure to make proper judgements, the issue concerns the status of those rules. Moral universalism claims that rules are the ground for something being good, and moral particularism denies just this. Within moral particularism the supervenience of right and wrong on other non-moral aspects is not fundamental but secondary, it is considered as happening that it is supervenient on those aspects.[28] So, there is nothing wrong in accepting equality within moral particularism.

Summarising, it is shown that moral particularism is not inconsistent with the ideal of equality. Contrary to what the argument against moral realism because of its moral particularism states, moral realism gives back the moral status to the ideal of equality which was covered over by the idea of what judgements mean in moral universalism. In moral realism the roots of equality are be found in the moral way of looking at oneself as one among others. Moral particularism undermines the argument for the incompleteness of the ordering regarding the moral seriousness of inequality. So vis-à-vis moral universalism moral realism is seen to be a promising alternative as a framework for an ideal of equality.

2.5 Summary

In this chapter, I introduced moral realism as an alternative to moral universalism as background for an ideal of equality. The reasons for moral universalism that hold that rules are necessary for moral judgements and form the ground for moral judgements were discussed. First, four ways of reasoning with moral universalism as a foundation for moral reasoning were discussed. The reasons for establishing some objective ground for moral reasoning appeared to be not convincing, because of the dependency of moral reasoning on subjective evaluation as in Hare's universalistic prescriptivism and in Singer's use of generalisation argument, or because of the dependency on subjective maxims as in O'Neill's Kantian ethics, or because the unsolved moral conflicts in Gewirth's good reason approach. Although the reasons for establishing a sound moral basis failed, their views

[28] See also the discussion on supervenience in chapter 5 p. 170.

on equality were not rejected. The idea, emphasised by Hare and Gewirth, that what is a reason for one is a reason for another too, is an element of the ideal of equality which is developed in this thesis. The idea seen in the approach of Singer and O'Neill, namely equal collective availability of some good for all, is also a central element in the ideal of equality proposed in this thesis.

Subsequently, it was shown that the reasons for moral universalism based on supervenience and the concept of reason were dependent on the concept of similarity. This concept led by following Wittgenstein's ideas on 'similarity' and 'to follow a rule' directly to particularism. Rules do not have any meaning beyond human practices.

The Davidson's radical interpretation view on language was introduced. Three questions were discussed with the help of which moral realism was contrasted with moral universalism in order to illuminate the former. In moral realism, the question why people are moved by moral beliefs at all is answered by an internal conceptual link between beliefs, including moral beliefs and actions. Beliefs and also moral beliefs, have to be interpreted; they are not interpreted apart from desires and actions. In discussing the question why people are moved by a particular moral reason rather than a prudential one, it was explained that in moral realism particular moral beliefs come about by perceiving the world in a particular moral way. In moral realism it is held that not acting according to morality is not merely irrational but can be immoral and bad. Finally, it was shown how the epistemological questions concerning moral knowledge were answered in moral realism. Instead of foundationalism, which was argued to lead to the problem of infallible knowledge, coherentism is accepted in which a belief is justified if the set of beliefs is more coherent with that belief than without it. Direct realism, the view that we are perceiving the world directly and not through some sort of mediating images, provides satisfying answers to problems concerning knowledge by perception. It was argued that with coherentism and direct realism we can account for illusions and persistent misperceptions also on moral matters. The argument of Williams against the possibility of moral perception was answered by an example exhibiting interdepency of the first-person perspective and a third-person perspective.

In this chapter, moral realism and its related moral particularism was introduced as an alternative to moral universalism as a background for an ideal of equality. By this alternative the argument for the incompleteness of the ordering reflecting the moral seriousness of the deviation from the ideal of equality was undermined. It opened up the possibility of a complete ordering in a distribution problem. It was argued that moral particularism is not inconsistent with equality. It was shown that equality does not imply moral universalism, and particularism, although it denies the status of rules

as necessary for the foundation of moral judgements, it does not deny the possibility of rules representing our moral judgements. It was argued that moral realism underlines the moral aspect to the ideal of equality. In moral realism the roots of equality lie in a moral way of perceiving this world and looking at oneself as one among others. The ideal of equality proposed in this thesis, in which how well off all simultaneously could have been with respect to some value determines what can be asked for in the name of equality, is related to this way of perceiving. Moral realism explains this way of perceiving in which the mutual dependency of the first-person perspective and the third-person perspective is acknowledged.

In the following chapters, the other traditional background assumptions of the modern idea of equality, volitional individualism and moral value pluralism will be discussed. In these chapters the further consequences of moral realism for equality will be explored.

2.6 Appendix 1

It can be proved that if a moral theory leads to action-guiding judgements in a simple form that can be formulated in a quite usual formal language, i.e. first order predicate logic, and it happens to be that in each situation similar actions are judged similarly and in similar situations one judges actions similarly because of supervenience, than there is a finite set of action guiding rules which prescribe those actions which are held to be good according to that morality. The proof is based on the use of the compactness theorem for first order predicate logic, and is borrowed from an argument given by G. Hellman with respect to some ideas about the mind/body-relation.[29]

With a morality is meant a body of knowledge according to which actions in their so-called basic action descriptions are judged to be good in particular situations. Basic action descriptions are such that those descriptions cannot be further analysed by other actions, they are performed directly. For example, switching on the light is not a basic action description but moving your fingers in a particular manner such that that the light will be switched on, is. Action descriptions are seen by Davidson as predicates on actions. For example *Jones buttered the toast in the bathroom with a knife at midnight.* is analysed as:
$\exists x(Butter(x, jones, toast) \wedge In(x, bathroom) \wedge With(x, knife) \wedge$
$\wedge At(x, midnight))$ [Davidson, 1980, p. 105].

The statement that in each situation S_i in which a moral theory is applicable, which can be described by T, there is an indication of a good action, can be interpreted as: in every situation S_i there is a local (situation bounded) definition of the predicate $GOOD()$ in terms of a basic action description $\alpha_i()$. So in those situations S_i in which T is satisfied $S_i \models T$, there is a local definition of $GOOD()$ satisfied too:
$S_i \models \forall x(GOOD(x) \equiv \alpha_j(x))$. So, we have a list,

$$\begin{aligned} S_1 &\models \forall x(GOOD(x) \equiv \alpha_j(x)) \\ S_2 &\models \forall x(GOOD(x) \equiv \alpha_k(x)) \\ S_3 &\models \forall x(GOOD(x) \equiv \alpha_l(x)) \\ &\vdots \end{aligned}$$

Because there are about infinite situations S_i, it is possible that there are infinite local definitions $\forall x(GOOD(x) \equiv \alpha_i(x))$ abbreviated by ψ_i of which at least one is true in a model for T.

[29] The argument of Hellman is elaborated in a syllabus by J. van Benthem on Model theory.

It will be shown that there is a finite set of basic action descriptions which is coextensive with $GOOD()$. This can be shown with the help of the compactness theorem. Subsequently, it will be shown that because of supervenience there is a finite set of action-guiding principles such that acting according them will be acting morally sound. It has to be shown that there is a finite set of formulas, say $\{\psi_1, \psi_2, \psi_3, \cdots \psi_n\}$ $(n \in N)$ for which $T \models \psi_1 \vee \psi_2 \vee \psi_3 \vee \cdots \vee \psi_n$.

Suppose, there is not such a finite set then for every finite subset $\{\psi_1, \psi_2, \psi_3, \cdots \psi_n\}$ of the infinite set of local definitions it is valid that $T \not\models \psi_1 \vee \psi_2 \vee \psi_3 \vee \cdots \vee \psi_n$.

Hence, it is not true that in every situation in which T is valid such a finite disjunction is valid. Therefore, there is a situation in which T is valid and $\neg(\psi_1 \vee \psi_2 \vee \psi_3 \vee \cdots \vee \psi_n)$ is valid. There is a model for $T \cup \{\neg\psi_1, \neg\psi_2, \neg\psi_2, \cdots, \neg\psi_n\}$. And there is such a model for every finite subset of local definitions, because we assumed there was not a finite subset of local definitions defining globally what is good. Consequently there is a model for $T \cup \{\neg\psi_i, \neg\psi_j, \neg\psi_k, \cdots\}$ (= the infinite set of local definitions). This model exists because of the compactness theorem:

> A set of formulas R has a model iff every finite subset of R_f has a model.

But now there is a model in which no local definition ψ_i is true, which is contrary to what was assumed.

So far, it has been shown that a finite set of basic action description will be sufficient for determining the morally correct actions. Now it will be shown with a similar argument using the compactness theorem that there is a finite set of action-guiding rules such that following them will result in acting morally correct.

As was shown in sections 2.2.2 it happened to be the case that in situations that are similar in relevant aspects one should perform the same actions. These relevant aspects of the situation can be seen as properties of actions. The rightness of an action parallels its properties. This might be called supervenience of rightness of an action on its properties. I suggest the following formalisation.

In every situation S_i in which morality is applicable, in which T is valid, $S_i \models T$, for every action x which has the following set of properties $\{C^i_{j,1}(x), C^i_{j2}(x), \cdots\}$ it is valid that $\alpha_i(x)$ and you should do x. So, we have the following list of rules:

$T \cup \{C^1_{1,1}(x), C^1_{1,2}(x), C^1_{1,3}(x), \cdots\} \models \alpha_1(x) \equiv GOOD(x)$
$T \cup \{C^1_{2,1}(x), C^1_{2,2}(x), C^1_{2,3}(x), \cdots\} \models \alpha_1(x) \equiv GOOD(x)$
$\vdots$
$T \cup \{C^2_{1,1}(x), C^2_{1,2}(x), C^2_{1,3}(x), \cdots\} \models \alpha_2(x) \equiv GOOD(x)$
$T \cup \{C^2_{2,1}(x), C^2_{2,2}(x), C^2_{2,3}(x), \cdots\} \models \alpha_2(x) \equiv GOOD(x)$
$\vdots$
$T \cup \{C^n_{1,1}(x), C^n_{1,2}(x), C^n_{1,3}(x), \cdots\} \models \alpha_n(x) \equiv GOOD(x)$
$T \cup \{C^n_{2,1}(x), C^n_{2,2}(x), C^n_{2,3}(x), \cdots\} \models \alpha_n(x) \equiv GOOD(x)$
$\vdots$

Now I have to show that this list of action-guiding principles is a finite list. The set of properties in an antecedent is finite because of compactness of first order predicate logic. So, for each rule there is a finite set of properties $\{C^i_{j,1}(x), \cdots, C^i_{j,l}(x)\}$ such that:
$T \cup \{C^i_{j,1}(x), \cdots, C^i_{j,l}(x)\} \models \alpha_i(x) \wedge GOOD(x)$
Now again with the use of compactness I show there is a finite list of those action-guiding rules. Because I stated that $GOOD()$ is coextensive with some non-moral properties, one of the list of properties has to be true of a good action. So we can state for each model satisfying $T, \alpha_i(x), GOOD(x)$ one of the properties $C^i_j(x)$meaning $C^i_{j,1}(x) \wedge \cdots \wedge C^i_{j,l}(x)$ has to be true. With the same argument with compactness as above there is for each equivalence a finite set of $C^i_j(x)$'s. Because of that, there is a finite list of action-guiding rules which covers the appropriate actions according moral theory T of the form:
IF $C^i_j(x)$ THEN PERFORM (x) WHICH IS $\alpha_i(x)$!
exactly what was to be shown.

Consequently, the discussion between moral universalism and moral particularism is not about the possibility of a finite list of action-guiding rules, both can accept it. The crucial issue is the status of moral rules. In moral universalism these are the reasons for evaluating an action as right or good. In moral particularism an action is evaluated as good because it is good.

This reasoning outlined above can be extended to the comparative form of rules. α can mean the description of the alternatives to be compared, $\alpha(x)$ could mean: a distribution x being a instead of b and $GOOD()$ can be taken the alternative to be chosen, or *BETTER or EQUIVALENT ALTERNATIVE()*. If we take two alternative kinds of distributions a and b which can be ordered vis-à-vis each other in each situation, meaning that one of the two is allowed to be chosen, then the conditions under which a has to be chosen and those under which b has to be chosen, can be specified by a finite list of predicates.